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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are presented for the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania City-Wide Testing Program. They involve the preparation of pupils for the Administration of the tests, preparation of teachers for administering the tests, some acceptable and unacceptable practices, use and dissemination of test results, and security concerns related to the testing program. (RC)

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OFFICE OF RESEARCH
AND EVALUATION
THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
DIVISION OF TESTING SERVICES

# THE PHILADELPHIA CITY-WIDE TESTING PROGRAM

## GUIDELINES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE TESTS AND THE INTERPRETATION AND USE OF TEST DATA

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## I. Preparation of Pupils for the Administration of the Tests

### A. Developing Positive Attitudes Toward the Testing Program

Pupils should be informed well before the testing is to begin what constitutes the City-Wide program, when they will be given the tests, what they are like, why they are given, and what use will be made of the results. Pupil discussion about these points should be encouraged.

### B. Developing Test-taking Skills

Pupils should be exposed to a wide variety of learning opportunities in conjunction with teacher-constructed tests, work-book exercises, assignments, etc. where different models of item and response format are included. They should be trained to handle different types of tests as part of the pupils' on-going development of test-taking skills meeting needs in addition to those related to school.

The basic minimum preparation for pupils for testing in the City-Wide Program is through the use of the practice tests provided by the test publishers. These practice tests are designed to foster familiarity and understanding about testing content, format and procedures prior to the actual test administration. They may be used as frequently and as intensively as needed. Practice test items and their answers should be thoroughly discussed. All pupil questions about the practice tests can be answered and discussed.

## II. Preparation of Teachers for Administering the Tests in the City-Wide Testing Program

### A. Developing Proper Attitudes of Staff Toward the Measurement Process

The instructional staff should view the measurement process which includes teacher-constructed tests and other measures in addition to those in the testing program as a positive force in improving the instructional program for pupils by providing information about a pupil's strengths and weaknesses in basic skill areas. Tests can be of help in planning instructional programs to anticipate individual or groups of pupils basic skills needs. By fully understanding the contribution of the measurement process to pupil growth and development and the improvement of instruction, teachers should be able to view the program more positively.

To develop proper staff attitudes, it is essential that the measurement process be a focus in staff development programs throughout the school year. Teachers should be given help in developing their own tests as well as help in administering the tests and utilizing the data obtained in the City-Wide Program. The School's testing program coordinator and district and central office staff should be considered primary resources in staff development activities.

B. Procedures in Preparing for Testing

1. Teachers serving as examiners should receive the actual test materials and be given training in their use several weeks prior to the administration of practice tests and actual tests.

2. Examiners should become thoroughly familiar with all phases of administering the tests and the materials used so that all tests will be administered accurately and smoothly according to the publisher's standardized directions. (Tests should be stored securely until used.)

3. The administration of the practice tests should be viewed as an opportunity for the examiner to improve test administration skills.

4. Examiners are encouraged to take the tests themselves to become fully aware of test administration concerns.

## III. Acceptable and Unacceptable Practices

A. Preparation for Testing

1. Acceptable Practices

a. Informing pupils how results may relate to decision-making in the school and how they may relate to report card information, etc. in order to get full pupil participation in the testing.

b. Using the practice tests to explain fully how each test is organized, what the items are like, how to understand the directions, what answers are correct and why, etc. The examiner is permitted to do many things in developing pupil understanding of the tests that are <u>not</u> permitted during the administration of the actual tests.

2. Unacceptable Practices

a. Coaching on the actual content of a particular test.

b. Using the actual city-wide program standardized test content as homework or study material.

c. Including actual city-wide program standardized test content in teacher-constructed tests.

d. Drilling on the actual content material included in the city-wide tests. The content universe is large enough to assure the security of actual test items.

e. Using the actual test items of another form of the tests administered in the city-wide program as a "curriculum guide" for instruction rather than the skills measured by the tests.

f. Providing copies of other commercially-published standardized tests as instructional materials rather than instructional exercises designed to develop the skills measured by the tests.

g. Informing pupils that the tests are not important or that the results will not affect pupils.

h. Giving another form of the tests used in the city-wide Program prior to the administration of the tests as "practice".

B. Administration of the Tests

1. Acceptable Practices

a. Motivating pupils by proper means under pleasant conditions to do their best when taking the test.

b. Following the publisher's instructions verbatim to assure standardized administration and later comparability of results.

c. Observing stated time limits accurately.

d. Being careful to avoid improper test administration behavior.

e. Informing pupils about the test publisher's instructions about guessing and trying all test items.

f. Making sure when tests are administered in several testing sessions that pupils do not work on sections previously administered when materials are re-distributed to pupils.

g. Observing carefully what pupils do during testing. Circulating around the room after pupils start work can help to encourage better performance and motivation, and detect possible test-taking errors by pupils (working in the wrong section, misunderstanding directions, etc.).

2. Unacceptable Practices

a. Embellishing or elaborating on instructions to be given to pupils.

b. Providing help to pupils that is not allowed.

c. Excluding pupils from testing unless they meet stated School District criteria for exclusion.

d. Reading aloud test items that are to be read silently by pupils.

e. Giving voice clues to correct answers for items to be read aloud.

f. Telling pupils to respond to all test items whether or not they have had the opportunity to read them.

C. Interpretation and Use of Test Data

1. Acceptable Practices

a. Making inferences and reaching conclusions that are appropriate for the results. Be careful not to go overboard in interpretations which cannot be substantiated.

b. Looking at several sets of test results over time before making judgments; be wary of relying on one test administration.

c. Questioning unusual or inappropriate results.

d. Using the practice tests to show pupils and parents samples of test items. Do not use the actual tests.

e. Understanding the types of scores reported before discussing them.

f. Making sure the format of the various reports is fully understood before using the data.

g. Recognizing possible errors or unusual or unexpected results that should be considered further before using.

h. Using the item information results after testing in planning classroom instruction. Again, actual test items should <u>not</u> be used or discussed.

i. Utilizing instructional materials but not test items that provide help in areas that are identified as instructional needs.

2. Unacceptable Practices

a. Reviewing the actual test items and their correct answers with the class after the city-wide program has been completed.

b. Ignoring other sources of information in interpreting or verifying results.

## IV. Use and Dissemination of Test Results

### A. Some General Considerations

1. In order to use test results effectively the user must be fully aware that tests are but samples of pupil behavior, subject to sampling errors; that a test score is not an absolute, unchanging truth but an estimate; that predictions based on test scores are but estimates; and that inferences drawn should be made with caution.

2. When used in broader applications, that is, in drawing conclusions over time about groups of pupils, test results must be used with caution and understanding. Results may serve, for example, as a partial basis for evaluating pupil progress.

3. It is important to note that achievement during any one or two-year period reflects not only the curriculum and instruction of that period but also past instructional experience which pupils have had. For example, certain tests measure skills which pupils have been developing since early in their school careers. Therefore, the evaluation of progress must take into consideration the prior opportunities pupils have had. The progress which pupils make will reflect, only in part, the effectiveness of the school program; therefore measures of progress should be considered carefully.

### B. The Testing Program Reports

1. The following computer-prepared reports are provided to the school giving scores and performance data for individual pupils:

   a. The list report of pupil scores - An alphabetical listing of pupils by class giving all of the scores for use by the staff for a variety of purposes.

   b. The cumulative record label - Provided individually for each pupil to be affixed to the cumulative record label card so that the current results can be made available and interpreted in terms of past results and other cumulative record information.

   c. The test score profile - Provided individually for each pupil showing the test results numerically and graphically for reporting to pupils and parents and other staff use.

   d. The performance analysis record - Provided individually for each pupil giving the test scores; a report of the percentage of items answered correctly, incorrectly, and omitted; and for each test item arranged by skill or content tested a notation whether the pupil answered correctly, incorrectly, or omitted the item. This record is for a more in-depth examination of pupil test performance for reporting results and planning subsequent instruction.

2. For school performance by grade level a computer-prepared school summary report is provided giving several ways of viewing the performance. In addition, each school receives various reports and analyses from the Division of Testing Services. All of these reports should be thoroughly considered by the school staff for implications for instruction and then, in turn, should have an effect on subsequent pupil performance.

3. Details concerning the interpretation and use of these reports are provided in special documents prepared and distributed by the Division of Testing Services and considered at staff development meetings for testing program coordinators.

4. Each of these reports should be examined carefully to determine whether they seem to report accurately what may be reasonable to expect based on past and other current status data obtained from this and other measuring processes for individual pupils and groups of pupils. Suspected errors should be brought to the attention of the Division of Testing Services immediately.

C. Sharing School Performance Data with the Community

1. It is the policy of the School District to report school performance data to the public through the news media and broad, general distribution to the schools and community. This public release of school data usually occurs several months after schools receive their reports. Consequently, each school can undertake to brief its community well in advance of the public release of school results by the Superintendent.

2. Parents have a right to know about the progress of their children. Test results provide parents with a means of following their child's academic growth. The general public, likewise, has a right to be informed about the status of the schools in their community. Summary results of individual schools provide the public with a means of assessing the overall progress being made in the schools.

## V. Security Concerns Related to the Testing Program

### A. Testing Program Materials

1. Before and after test administrations, testing materials should be stored carefully and securely to avoid loss, damage, or exposure to unauthorized persons.

2. Accurate inventories should be maintained. All losses in materials should be able to be accounted for.

3. Damaged or unusable materials should be destroyed by burning or shredding.

4. Actual testing materials should never be given to parents or pupils before or after testing for "reference", etc.

5. Actual test items should not be used in articles written about the program.

6. If test booklets are retained by teachers for use in interpretation of results, the utmost care must be given to prevent access to booklets by pupils or parents.

### B. Testing Program Reports for Individual Pupils

1. All reports containing data of individual pupils must be stored to safeguard the information from unauthorized persons. Cabinets that can be locked should be used.

2. List reports should be retained securely in the building as long as the pupils involved are enrolled in the school. At terminal grades after the classes concerned have left the school, the lists should be destroyed by burning or shredding.

3. One copy of both the test score profile and performance analysis record should be kept for comparative use, etc. in the pupil pocket for school records. All other copies distributed to appropriate staff members should be collected and destroyed by burning or shredding after the usability period has been exhausted.